

Expert help with credit building and debt management

Through our partnership with Consolidated Credit, a nonprofit credit counseling agency, Fresh Start participants can get one-on-one help building credit and managing debt.

1. Credit counseling

Cost: Free, unlimited sessions

A certified counselor reviews your income, expenses and debts with you, one on one.

- A personal plan for your money
- Help understanding your credit report
- Steps to build or rebuild your credit
- Your options for dealing with debt
- No obligation to sign up for anything

2. Debt management plan

Cost: Low monthly fee

If it's a good fit, the counselor sets up a plan to pay off your debts.

- One monthly payment instead of many
- They ask your creditors to lower interest and fees
- Debts are usually paid off in 3 to 5 years
- Credit cards in the plan are closed, so you can't keep using them

About the fee: The monthly fee for a debt management plan is limited by law and included in your one monthly payment. Consolidated Credit says its clients pay about \$40 a month on average, and fees may be waived for a time for people in need. Ask your counselor.

Good to know

- **Covers more than credit cards:** medical bills, personal loans, collections and some payday loans can often be included. No minimum credit score needed.
- **Not included:** court fines, fees and restitution, child support, federal student loans, taxes, and car or home loans.
- **Your credit score may dip at first** when accounts close. On-time payments help rebuild it over time.

How to get started

- 1 Join the Fresh Start Financial Education program. It's free.
- 2 Call a credit counselor directly. Sessions are free and unlimited. Use the toll-free number in your Fresh Start online learning portal.
- 3 Decide with your counselor whether a debt management plan is right for you.

Credit counseling and debt management services are provided by Consolidated Credit, a nonprofit credit counseling agency. Source: consolidatedcredit.org. Plan details and fees may vary; confirm with your counselor.